

BW 73
B57D3

WESLEYAN CONFERENCE, BIRMINGHAM,
1894.

THE ROOT & THE FRUITS OF METHODISM.

LIST OF ARTICLES.

- | | |
|---|--|
| No. 1. John Wesley's Early Days. | No. 4. Birmingham Methodism: Modern. |
| „ 2. The Dawn of Methodism. | „ 5. Influence of Methodism on the Church. |
| „ 3. History of Birmingham Methodism: Past. | „ 6. A Methodist Episcopate. |
| No. 7. A Pilgrimage to Quinton. | |

REPRINTED FROM THE
BIRMINGHAM DAILY GAZETTE,

July 4th to July 26th, 1894.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

PRINTED AT THE OFFICES OF THE "BIRMINGHAM DAILY GAZETTE" CO., LD., 52 AND 53, HIGH STREET, BIRMINGHAM.

Wesley Memorial Library

**Thursfield Smith Collection
of
Wesleyana**



Atlanta, - Georgia

*With the Author's
Oka? Dacue*

THE ROOT AND THE FRUITS OF METHODISM.

No. 1.—JOHN WESLEY'S EARLY DAYS.

In the course of a few days our city will witness the arrival of some 900 Methodist preachers and 240 Methodist laymen assembled at their annual Conference. The event has set us cogitating on the large issues that may hang upon very small contingencies. We find ourselves indeed adrift on that vast ocean of speculation, the "Ifs of history." If a little Jewish waif, set afloat among the flags of the Nile in a frail basket of rushes, had been devoured by a crocodile, who would have been the Hebrew leader and legislator? and how would such a calamity have affected the destiny of mankind? If that ark which contained all that remained of the antediluvian world had foundered amid the waters of the great deluge, what would have become of the human race? And if a little boy of six years old had perished in the flames which consumed the old Epworth Rectory in 1709, what would have become of Methodism? He was saved, in the light of subsequent events it would seem providentially so, to become the pioneer and legislator of the greatest religious movement of modern times. John Wesley was born at Epworth Rectory on June 17 (O.S.), 1703. He came from a worthy stock on both sides. His father, Samuel Wesley, had been curate in a London church when James II. had ordered his well-known second indulgence to be read in all the London churches. Instead of complying with the tyrant's mandate the brave curate took for his text on that occasion, "Be it known unto thee, O King, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." His mother was the daughter of Dr. Annesley, a man of aristocratic descent, who at one time had been prominent among the Puritan divines. At the early age of 13 she examined the controversy between Church and Dissent, and decided in favour of the Established Church. The parsonage at Epworth was the scene of many cruel hardships and bitter privations; the good Rector entered upon his duties there in debt, and as the years went by this burden increased upon him. His family increased—ultimately to 19—but his tithes did not; and although he worked hard, hammering rhymes out of his brain to supplement a scanty income, he was hard set to provide the necessities of life for his wife and family. His brave wife nobly seconded him in his efforts to keep away the wolf of want, and, according to her own confession, often had an anxious time of it. The Archbishop of York once asked her whether she had ever really wanted bread. "My lord," she said, "I will freely own to your Grace that, strictly speaking, I never did want bread. But then I had so much care to get it before it was eat, and to pay for it after, as has often made it very unpleasant to me, and I think to have bread on such terms is the next

degree of wretchedness to having none at all." With all these difficulties in keeping something in the pot she found time for the intellectual and moral training of her children. John, after his escape from the fire, became the object of her special solicitude, so that when at the age of 10 he went away to school he was a thoughtful, religious boy, and had received the Holy Communion. In 1713 he was admitted to the Charterhouse, where he remained for more than six years. Here he found the fare as frugal and the commons as short as at home; the big boys stole his meat, and for four years he had little but bread to eat, and not "great plenty" of that; a discipline which, perhaps, prepared him for the hardships of after-years when he had to live on blackberries whilst itinerating in Cornwall. He made good use of his time, however, at the Charterhouse, for his brother Samuel reports of him to their father, "Jack is with me, and a brave boy, learning Hebrew as fast as he can."

In 1720 he entered as a commoner at Christ Church, Oxford. Here he made rapid progress in his studies, but seems to have lost that religious tone of character which his mother had fostered in the old Epworth home. When he was 22 his father wanted him to enter into Holy Orders; this was a most important matter, for although he had lost his earlier seriousness under the influence of the gay young bloods at the University, Wesley was far too honourable a man to take such a step thoughtlessly. Just at this time one of the great Catholic classics fell into his hands, Kempis's "Imitation of Christ." This, and some other devotional books recommended to him by his mother, made a deep impression upon his mind. He entered upon a new course of life, watched against outward sin, sought inward holiness, and after much consultation with his father and mother on the question of Holy Orders was ordained deacon by the Bishop of Oxford in 1725. The next year he was elected Fellow of Lincoln College, which fellowship he held for more than 25 years. Whilst holding the office of Greek Lecturer and Moderator of the Classes he was called away to serve his father as curate, in which capacity he remained for over two years. In 1729 he returned to his old post at Oxford. During his absence his brother Charles had gathered around him a few young men like-minded with himself to help each other in the religious life. Thus was founded the celebrated "Holy Club." This was the genesis of the great Methodist movement, formed not by John but by Charles Wesley in 1729. To this company John, after his return from Lincolnshire, joined himself, and soon became its head and chief. The club was reinforced by others, notably by James Hervey, whose "Meditations Among the Tombs" was a popular religious classic half-a-century ago, and the poor servitor from Pembroke College, George Whitfield,

whose marvellous eloquence charmed and sobered the scoffing wits of the age, and gave a great impetus to the Evangelical movement of the 18th century. Wesley was at this time a staunch Churchman, as indeed he always remained; conformed most strictly to all ecclesiastical usages, and laid himself out for a life of practical usefulness. He communicated every Sunday and on every festival, fasted twice in the week, read to the prisoners in gaol, visited the sick, gave alms of all he possessed, paid for the education of the children of the poor or educated them himself, and brought upon himself—with pity he it said—the ridicule “of men who were actually being prepared for the sacred ministry of the Church.”

In 1735 he, his brother Charles, and several of the Oxford Methodists went out to Georgia with the idea of converting the Indians as well as of ministering to the spiritual needs of the Colonists. On the journey out he was much impressed with the calmness of some Moravian refugees during a storm, and on landing sought an interview with their pastor, from which he gained some further insight into the nature of spiritual religion. But his work in Georgia was a failure. His rigid High Churchism provoked the resentment of the Colonists; the Indians he did not touch. An unfortunate love affair brought his labours there to a close. A young lady, niece of the Governor of the Colony, fell in love with the handsome and zealous young missionary, and he was by no means indifferent to her charms. He consulted his Moravian friends about marrying her, and they advised him not to do so. She found consolation in marrying someone else, and so fell off in her religious observances that Wesley excommunicated her. After that it was no longer advisable for him to remain in Georgia, and he returned to England after an absence of two years a “sadder but a wiser man.” “I went to America to convert the Indians,” he said, “but, oh, who shall convert me?” On returning to London he met with Peter Böhler, a Moravian pastor just arrived from Germany, and from conversation with him was convinced that he was without saving faith, and could only cry in great distress, “Lord, help Thou mine unbelief.” Meanwhile his brother Charles had found the great blessing. At length, on May 24, 1738, in a meeting of a society in Aldersgate Street, whilst a layman was reading Luther’s preface to the Epistle to the Romans, Wesley felt his heart strangely warmed, and experienced that inward trust and assurance known among the Methodists as conversion. The interest he now felt in the Moravians induced him to visit the Continent. On this journey he met the celebrated Count Zinzendorf, and both at Marienborn and Herrnhut met with people who gave living proofs of the “power of faith.” He returned to England, bringing with him convictions which influenced him in all his subsequent work. Moravianism, in its German shape, has never taken deep root in this country; what is best in the system lives in the great Methodist Church.

NO. 2.—THE DAWN OF METHODISM.

Our first article dealt with the leading incidents of John Wesley’s childhood, college career, admission to Holy Orders, labours as a missionary in America, and the influence of Moravianism upon his mind. He was now 36 years of age. To follow him for the next 50 years up and down the country in his vast itinerant labours would be beside the purpose of this note. We can only just glance at the general character of his work, and indicate the steps by which the denomination which bears his name has reached its present condition of development. During Wesley’s stay in Georgia, Whitfield had gone forth like another John the Baptist, calling men to “flee from the wrath to come.” His first sermon was preached at Gloucester in the church in which

he had been baptised; and it was reported to the Bishop that 15 people had gone mad on the occasion. The good prelate, who sympathised with the noble enthusiast, only wished that the madness might not pass away before the next Sunday. The madness increased all over the country. Wherever he went he was received with ovations and blessings. The churches in which he preached were crowded; people climbed on to the roofs, and hung on to the rails of the organ lofts; and ultimately he had to take to preaching in the fields and on the commons. The effect of his eloquence was electrical; men and women burst into tears, dropped upon their knees in great agony, and then sprang to their feet in transports of joy. Whitfield had all the natural qualifications of a great orator. His tall, stately figure, regular features, luminous blue eyes, winning countenance, the compass and music of his voice, apt illustrations, energetic gestures, and a soul burning with zeal and in sympathetic touch with rough untutored men gave him irresistible sway over the tens of thousands who came to his ministry. The whilom potboy had roused the country. Before Wesley returned from Georgia Whitfield had written to ask him to continue his work whilst he crossed the Atlantic. The prim and orderly Oxford Don was reluctant to commit himself to anything so extravagant as field preaching, but when in 1739 he met Whitfield in Bristol, and saw the marvellous results of the great evangelist’s work, his prejudices gave way. For the next 50 years he preached wherever he found an opportunity, in the churches by preference when they were open to him, on the hillsides and on the commons when the churches were closed, which was often the case. His flying visits all over the three kingdoms; the brutal treatment he received from the savage colliers of Kingswood, and the bull-baiting, cock-fighting roughs of the Black Country; the short commons and hard bed he found in Cornwall, and the cold indifference he received in Scotland; the opposition he met at the hands of both civic and ecclesiastical authorities, and the troubles that multiplied upon him from his own household of faith; his unfortunate mésalliance, and the vile slanders that were circulated about him; and, despite it all, the splendid success that crowned his truly apostolic labours—has not the thrilling story been told a hundred times?

A LIFE OF UNEXAMPLED ENERGY.

During those 53 years from 1738, when he entered upon his itinerant work, to 1791, when he peacefully yielded up his spirit, singing, “I’ll praise my Maker while I’ve breath,” he had travelled 225,000 miles; preached more than 40,000 sermons to congregations sometimes more than 20,000 strong, most of them in the open air; organised societies all over the British Isles; started a missionary society, a tract society, a loan society for the poor, day schools, dispensaries, and a host of benevolent institutions which anticipated some of the great philanthropic efforts of modern times; wrote treatises on logic, philology, medicine, natural philosophy, and, indeed, on almost every branch of human knowledge; composed and translated hymns; compiled a dictionary and a theological library; kept a journal as interesting as Pepys; wrote thousands of letters, and kept himself abreast of the literature of Europe. No wonder Dr. Johnson should say, “John Wesley’s conversation is good, but he is never at leisure. He is always obliged to go at a certain hour.” If he had not been a most methodical man he never could have got through his enormous work. When we consider that the man spent the greater part of his time on horseback, travelling over an open country before Macadam was born, his literary performances fall little short of the miraculous.

From the foregoing sketch it will be seen that Wesley was something more than an itinerant evangelist; he was a great organiser and legislator.

Whitfield went forth scattering the seed broadcast, but made little or no provision for garnering the results. Wesley scattered the seed, too, but arranged for storing the harvest. Up and down the country where the preachers had been, small gatherings of converts assembled in Christian fellowship; there were such societies in London, Bristol, Newcastle, and other places. The first official recognition of these was in 1739, when a few people came to Wesley in London and asked him to spend some time with them in prayer. The date of that historic gathering was printed until lately upon the Methodist Society ticket, but by some strange infatuation it has disappeared from the new Methodist Church ticket. Why remove these old landmarks? They have a certain historic value. In another 25 years the Methodist people will be ignorant of the date of the origin of their community. Is the Conference ashamed of the rock out of which it was hewn? We will lay before our readers a few items which will enable them to follow in chronological order the growth and development of the Methodist system, and it will be seen that most of the characteristic institutions of the denomination sprang up in Wesley's time. The first society was recognised in London by Wesley in 1739. The first Conference was held in London, consisting of six clergymen and four ministers, in 1744. The societies were first distributed into territorial circuits at the third Conference held in Bristol in 1746. The Schools Fund and the Contingent Fund were ordained at the 13th Conference held in Bristol in 1756. The Worn-out Preachers' Fund was instituted at the 20th Conference held in London in 1763. The Foreign Missionary Society was started at the 26th Conference held in Leeds in 1769, when £70 was subscribed by the members present. City Road Chapel, London, was dedicated by Mr. Wesley on November 1, 1778. The Deed Poll was executed by Mr. Wesley in 1784. The Home Mission Fund was formed at the Conference held in Leeds in 1806. The Chapel Fund was founded at the 65th Conference held in Bristol in 1808. The Children's Fund was started at the Conference held in Leeds in 1818. A Theological Institution was decided upon, after much agitation, at the Conference held in Manchester in 1833, and the first branch was opened at Hoxton in 1835. These may be considered the principal landmarks of Methodist history. At the first Conference after Wesley's death the circuits were formed into districts, with a Chairman appointed to each, who had a limited authority in the circuits from Conference to Conference. These District Committees were at first composed of ministers only, but in 1801 the general steward of each circuit was invited to be present. When the connexional funds were placed under a committee of the Conference composed of an equal number of ministers and laymen, there was a further extension of the lay element in the District Meeting. These central Financial Committees gradually developed into the Departmental Committees of Review. These Committees of Review, which used to sit a week before the general Conference, were at length absorbed in the Conference itself; the first representative Conference being held in Bradford in 1878, under the presidency of Dr. Rigg.

METHODISM AND ITS TRIALS.

When Wesley died he left behind him a religious organisation which his genius created and his personal labours had largely built up, consisting of 300 ministers and 79,000 members. According to the latest statistics there are now more than 5,100 ministers and over a million members connected with the original Methodist Church, and if we include the various splits, offshoots, and branches of Methodism throughout the world they will represent 35,987 ministers and over six millions of members. Reckoning the adherents not actually joined in Church fellowship there are probably not less than 30 million

people connected with this great Protestant community. Some idea of the material prosperity of Methodism may be formed from the fact that since the Chapel Committee commenced its operations 35 years ago a sum of £9,000,000 has been expended on trust property, whilst the total estimated value of such property in Great Britain is more than 11½ millions sterling.

During the hundred years that have elapsed since Wesley died Methodism has encountered stormy weather and has seen "perilous times," but it has battled bravely on in the teeth of the tempest both from without and within, and to-day shows but few traces of the ravages of time. It has a noble record in the past, and of late has shown a quickened interest in all those forms of social, philanthropic, and directly spiritual work which marked its earlier days. And as long as it remains true to the enthusiasm and self-sacrificing spirit of its founder there is every reason to believe that its future triumphs will be as great and as beneficent as those which characterise its previous history.

Table showing total estimated value of Methodist trust property:—

District.	£	District.	£
First London	562,402	Liverpool.....	865,264
Second London ..	499,637	Manchester.....	813,416
Third London.....	408,028	Bolton	746,180
Bedford & Northampton	235,000	Halifax&Bradford	723,564
Kent.....	184,000	Leeds	601,499
East Anglia.....	153,400	Sheffield	285,092
Oxford.....	184,264	Nottingham and Derby	444,425
Portsmouth.....	180,000	Lincoln.....	184,394
Channel Isles.....	76,491	Hull	313,857
Devonport & Plymouth	189,151	York.....	243,413
Cornwall	231,284	Whitby and Darlington.....	274,815
Exeter	167,996	Newcastle-upon-Tyne.....	376,815
Bristol	260,000	Carlisle	157,743
Bath.....	189,099	Isle of Man.....	54,291
Cardiff & Swansea	228,633	Edinburgh and Aberdeen	159,127
South Wales	71,987	Zetland Isles	9,570
North Wales	217,021		
Birmingham and Shrewsbury.....	624,704		
Macclesfield	343,653		
			£11,260,308

No. 3.—HISTORY OF BIRMINGHAM METHODISM: PAST.

On a cold, dreary winter's day, Tuesday, March 15, in the year 1738, three horsemen—as G. P. R. James would say—not very gaily mounted, rode out of the ancient city of Oxford, bound for the town of Manchester. About eight o'clock in the evening, the night being dark and wet, and the roads, such as they were, being very uncertain, they lost their way; but the instinct of their weary, mud-bespattered steeds conveyed them safely over a narrow footbridge, which spanned a ditch, leading into the little town of Shipston. Here they supped, read prayers, and expounded the lessons for the day to the inmates of the hostelry, and went to bed. Next morning betimes they continued their journey, and arrived in Birmingham in time for dinner. The three travellers were a Mr. Fox, recently a prisoner in Oxford City Gaol (for what offence history does not say), afterwards a vendor of fowls, pigs, and cheese; the Rev. John Kitchin, Fellow of Corpus Christi College; and the Rev. John Wesley, Fellow of Lincoln College, just recently returned from Georgia. This is the first account we have of Wesley's visit to Birmingham. Some of our local historians date the introduction of Methodism here from his visit. This, however, is hardly correct, for Wesley says that they neglected to instruct those who waited on them at dinner, and were reproved for their negligence by a shower of hail when they

again set out upon their journey. Hutton says the sect was instituted here by Whitfield in 1738, but as Whitfield went on board the Whitaker, bound for Georgia, on December 30, 1737, and was not in London again until the middle of December of the following year, that can scarcely have been the case. If Whitfield founded the sect here in 1738, it must have been on a flying visit, of which we can find no mention. He was at Nantwich on December 3 of that year, and five days after he was in London, where he remained until the year closed. In fact Hutton and all the local historians who have followed his lead, are wrong about the origin of Birmingham Methodism. Neither of the Wesleys nor Whitfield had the honour of introducing Methodism here. That seems to have been done by a much humbler individual of the name of Ball, who some time in the early part of 1742 preached at Gosta Green. We give an extract from a pamphlet published in 1744, now extremely scarce, but a copy of which we found the other day in the British Museum, which seems to contain the most authentic account of the origin of Methodism in Birmingham and the neighbourhood. This paper says:—"It is about two years since the First of this Denomination made his Appearance in Birmingham. His name was Ball. He held forth on a little Green at the Town's end called Gostey-Green, and had a numerous Audience. Curiosity will always lead People to see strange Sights, and few there were who attended him from any other motive. This Gentleman proposed a collection for building a place of Worship—I think it was in Cambridge). His Proposal met with no Encouragement, and he soon left Birmingham. It is very commonly reported that not long after he was committed to Gaol for some offence of a civil nature. The next who came to Birmingham was Mr. Charles Westley. He preached in the streets for the first time on Whit-Sunday last, and has since made several visits there." This, we think, settles the origin of

BIRMINGHAM METHODISM

The full title of this pamphlet, which is evidently the production of a staunch Churchman, is "Some Papers giving an Account of the Rise and Progress of Methodism at Wednesbury, in Staffordshire, and in other parishes adjacent; as likewise of the late Riot in those parts." Printed by J. Roberts, London, 1744, 8vo, 30pp. These papers agree with the entries in the journals of the Wesley Brothers. Charles Wesley, accompanied by a Mr. Graves, came to Wednesbury in November, 1742, and preached in the "Coalpit Field" at Holloway Bank. After his first visit in 1738 there is no mention of John Wesley being in the neighbourhood again until January, 1743, when he preached at Wednesbury to a "deeply attentive" congregation, and made the friendly acquaintance of the vicar, the Rev. Mr. Eggington. Nothing is said of his visiting Birmingham on that occasion. On May 22, however, of that same year (1743) Charles Wesley was in Birmingham, and preached to a congregation of between one and two thousand people. That must have been on the Whit-Sunday referred to in the pamphlet. During that month the riot broke out at Wednesbury, brought about by a fiery Welshman named Williams, who had called the clergy dumb dogs who would not bark. They showed their teeth, however, at this insult; Mr. Eggington—who died a year after—from a friend was turned into a foe, preached furiously against the new movement, and raised a devil which the magistrates were either too feeble or too apathetic to quell. John Wesley was on the scene that same month trying to pacify matters, to but little purpose. In October of the same year he called on his friend the Rev. S. Taylor, vicar of Quinton, preached to a "thin, dull congregation," and rode to Birmingham. The next day, October 20, 1743, he preached here for the first time—so far as we have any mention of his preaching in this town—and the next day went

on to Wednesbury, where he received very rough usage, but where nothing more serious happened to him than the loss of the flap of his waistcoat and a little skin off one of his hands.

During the next few years he paid brief visits here at long intervals, when he generally preached in the open air, sometimes under a downpour of rain from the clouds and a shower of stones from the mob. Hutton says that the Birmingham Methodists "were first covered by the heavens, equally exposed to the rain and the rabble." There was a song popular in the neighbourhood at the time, the chorus of which was:—

"Mr. Wesley's come to town
To try and pull the churches down."

and under its inspiration, the Birmingham roughs—a race not yet extinct—baptised the evangelist with showers of stones, mud, and rotten eggs, which, however, never disturbed his equanimity. This bitter persecution extended over several years. Charles Wesley preached in the Bull Ring close to the old church in 1744, when the mob set the bells a-ringing to take refuge in some friend's house. When Alexander Mather was here in 1763 there was a great revival, Pawson was here in 1763 there was a great revival, and the violence of the mob revived too; people were in danger of being murdered when they came out of the preaching house, and the magistrates would not interfere. But at length a Mr. Wortly Birch took them in hand, laid some of the ringleaders in the dungeon, and left them a night or two to cool. The rest he fined, obliged them to pay the money down, and gave it to the poor. By this means their stout spirits were humbled, and the society had peace, so says Mather. But Methodism made slow progress here for some time.

WESLEY'S DISLIKE OF OUR TOWN.

When Wesley visited here in 1760 he found the small society torn by internal dissensions, but he "rejoined several who had long been separated from their brethren, and left upwards of 50 resolved to stand together in the good old path." He calls Birmingham a "barren, dry, uncomfortable place," and whilst from time to time he had hopes that the "wilderness would blossom and bud as the rose," he was continually disappointed. Indeed, the earlier conditions under which the work was carried on were not very favourable to success. Most of the Methodists of those days were devout communicants of the Church of England, and the only building the dissenting element of the community possessed for many years was a miserable house in Steelhouse Lane, occupied by a Mr. Walker. This tenement, if history says truly, was haunted by creatures, which have ever been considered the natural enemies of mankind, of whatever sect or persuasion. Under the influence of intense religious enthusiasm men may be able to brave the inclement elements of the heavens or even the brutal violence of senseless mobs; religion has often succeeded and flourished under such discouraging conditions; but we doubt whether it is possible for a religious or any other society to prosper under the irritating persecutions of the *cimex lectularius*. There is a limit even to the most heroic endurance. No wonder Mr. Wesley should describe Birmingham as

AN "UNCOMFORTABLE PLACE."

It seems to have been so to a greater extent than he imagined to the afflicted society in Steelhouse Lane. That the sect held its own, to say nothing of making progress, amid the bloodthirsty depredations of the swarming *cimicidae* speaks well for its vitality. But the repulsive insects which infested Mr. Walker's establishment were by no means the most unfavourable conditions with which Methodism had to contend in those early days. Most religious revivals have

been accompanied by certain abnormal developments arising out of mental obliquity and moral depravity; such "pestilent heresies" are coincident with the origin of Christianity itself. Antinomianism is a monster-birth of the great evangelical doctrine of Justification by Faith. It developed here in all its hideous deformity during the evangelical movement of the 18th century. During one of his flying visits to Birmingham in 1746 Wesley met with a man who said that he had a right to everything in the world, since Christ was his; that he was at liberty to take anything out of his neighbour's shop if he wanted it; and was free to license with all the women in the world if they gave their consent. No wonder the clergy, who perhaps only saw the extravagances of the movement, should have directed all the lightnings of their wrath against the immoral vagaries of these enthusiasts and fanatics. Wesley spared them no more than the clergy did; he called them "wild boars, fierce, unclean, brutish, blasphemous Antinomians," who had utterly destroyed the work of years. The man quivered with indignation when he saw the great Pauline doctrine—the doctrine, too, of the Church he loved so well—trailed in the mud in this way. But despite the ravages caused by bugs and "boars" Methodism made steady, if slow, progress. In 1764 the society removed from its straitened, uncomfortable quarters in Steelhouse Lane to a place in Moor Street, formerly used as a theatre. Wesley opened it for public worship on Wednesday, March 21, and was evidently pleased at this new use of the building, for he observes, "Happy would it be if all the playhouses in the kingdom were converted to so good an use." The mob, however, objected to this appropriation of the place, and tried to create a disturbance on the occasion by throwing dirt and stones, but the authorities promptly clapt a few of the ring-leaders in gaol, which considerably damped the zeal of their followers.

THE OLD THEATRE.

The old theatre in Moor Street, entered, as already stated, in 1764, continued to be the temple of Birmingham Methodism for the next 18 years, and during that period Wesley seems to have visited the town 11 times. Many of the early Methodist worthies held forth in the dreary old place. Notably, Thomas Hanby, who at eight years of age was cast upon the world by a drunken father, became President of the Conference, and who for 44 years faced the fury of mobs throughout England and Scotland. He was a man of so mild a temper that he was called the "benevolent Thomas Hanby." John Pawson, who was disinherited by his uncle for becoming a Methodist, who served the connexion through 44 years of persecution, became President, and by his blameless life was known as a "saintly man." Alexander Mather, a Scotchman with characteristic Scotch grit in him; he, too, became President, was for many years a "pillar of the Methodist edifice." Benson says of him that no man was more universally respected among his brethren. These, and other worthies less known, but not less heroic, served Birmingham Methodism back in the old Moor Street days. During those 18 years Methodism had so prospered in the town that increased accommodation became necessary. On July 6, 1782, Wesley, who was then in his eightieth year, preached the valedictory sermon in the quondam theatre, and on the following Sunday morning at eight o'clock opened the Cherry Street Chapel, which the liberality of the Birmingham Methodists had built at a cost of £1,200. He preached again in the evening to a crowded congregation. In the middle of his sermon there was a crash which created a general panic for a few minutes; no wonder the people were frightened, for only a few years before, when he was preaching at Colne, a side gallery, containing 150 people, came down with a smash. However, on this occasion it was

nothing more serious than the breaking of a bench on which some people were standing. The ministers in the Staffordshire Circuit when Cherry Street was built were: John Easton, Thomas Hanby, and Samuel Randal, one of them at least historic in Methodist annals. It would seem that some of the local clergy did not take a favourable view of these new developments, for on the Sunday following the opening of Cherry Street Wesley attended the old church and heard a furious tirade against these "hairbrained itinerant enthusiasts," which he thought "totally missed the mark." But all the sermons he heard in the Birmingham churches were not of this character, for on another occasion he went to St. Mary's, and heard a curate who preached an "admirable sermon." Four years after Cherry Street Chapel was built it was crowded out, the number of communicants had risen to over 500; and the Bradford Street Chapel was opened by Wesley on Wednesday, July 12, 1786. Meanwhile the number of members rose to more than 800; the society was inferior to none in the kingdom except London and Bristol, and the veteran evangelist, now in his 87th year, opened another chapel in Belmont Row, on Sunday, March 22, 1789. He only came to Birmingham once after this, and that was a year before his death, when he preached at Quinton, where a society had been formed in 1777 by Mr. Ambrose Foley, and where a chapel had been built about 1784. On the occasion of his last visit he was struck with the rapid growth of the town, which he thought was three times as large as it was 50 years before. In those closing years of his life Wesley had every reason to be gratified with the result of his mission to Birmingham. He had opened three commodious chapels, which were well filled; unity prevailed in the societies; he had no trouble, except on one occasion a small tussle with some local preachers, who showed a spirit of independency, but afterwards agreed to be guided by the rules of Conference. In one of his last visits he describes the work here as "glorious!" The new movement, which was at first located there in Steelhouse Lane, had spread out over the town, and when he died he left behind him here members numbering over 800.

ITS RAPID DEVELOPMENT.

It may interest some of our readers to trace the development of Birmingham Methodism, from being an unnamed society up to the time when it gave its name to one of the largest and most important of the 35 districts into which the Connexion is now divided. When the societies were first grouped into seven circuits at the Bristol Conference of 1746, all the societies in this neighbourhood were included in the Evesham Circuit. In the "Disciplinary Minutes" of 1748 it is called the Staffordshire Circuit, and the ground it covered extended over a larger territory than is now included in the Birmingham and Shrewsbury District. James Jones was the circuit preacher in 1749, and, seeing that his duties extended over a region which included Stroud, Cirencester, Stanley, Evesham, Wednesbury, Shrewsbury, and Leominster we can see considerable significance in the old term a "round preacher." It continued to be called the Staffordshire Circuit for 34 years, until the building of Cherry Street Chapel in 1782, when it was called the Birmingham Circuit. When the circuits were formed into districts it was called the Birmingham District, in 1798. Shrewsbury was made a separate district in 1808, and included five circuits; but from 1821 to 1823 the name of Shrewsbury disappears from the minutes of Conference, and Madeley is substituted instead. In 1823, however, the name of Shrewsbury appears again. In the year 1835 the two districts of Birmingham and Shrewsbury were amalgamated, and from that time until now it has been called the Birmingham and Shrewsbury District.

During the 40 years that elapsed between Wesley's death and the first Conference held here in 1836

Methodism made considerable progress, the number of members having risen from 800 to 2,380. Cherry Street Chapel was too small to accommodate the congregations, and had to be enlarged. Joseph Entwisle, Henry Taft, M.D., and John Bicknell were the preachers in the circuit at the time, but it was upon Mr. Taft that the main burden of this undertaking fell, and it proved too much for him; he died the year following the reopening of the chapel. He was buried in the renovated building, suggesting the idea that he had built his own tomb. A tablet was put up there stating that he died in 1824. When the chapel was pulled down in 1886 his remains were removed; the tablet now stands in the chapel of the Central Hall. Dr. Taft was the uncle of the now venerable Dr. Melson, well-known in Birmingham Methodism for more than 60 years. He came to Birmingham in 1825 at the mature age of 14, red hot from Woodhouse Grove School, and from that time to the demolition of the chapel he knew no other place of worship, except during the five years he spent at Cambridge University, and for most of the time he and his excellent wife had four classes between them. A year after Cherry Street Chapel was reopened a new chapel was built at St. Martin Street, which was converted into a school when the present Islington Chapel was opened in 1864. The Birmingham Circuit was divided into two in 1835, Birmingham West (Cherry Street) and Birmingham East (Belmont Row). The ministers on the ground were:—Cherry Street: William Naylor, John Slater, John Bumby; Joseph Collier, R. Mack, supernumeraries. Belmont Row: John Rigg and Thomas Squance. The members in the two circuits amounted to 2,388.

NOTEWORTHY MINISTERS.

Birmingham Methodism had some noteworthy ministers from the building to the rebuilding of Cherry Street Chapel. Thomas Hanby has already been mentioned; there was also Joseph Benson, the commentator, whose "overwhelming eloquence of declamation" drew to his preaching both the clergy and the bishops of the Church. In controversy Dr. Priestley found in him a foeman worthy of his steel. Jonathan Edmondson, president of the Conference, and a scholarly man; "Honest" Sammy Bardsley, who lived to be the oldest preacher in the Connexion; John Nelson, the celebrated Yorkshire stonemason, the story of whose life reads like a romance; George Morley, the originator of the Wesleyan Missionary Society. He used to tell a good story of his early itinerant days. On one occasion, when he met the society for renewal of tickets at the colliery village of Selstone, as soon as the public service was concluded, all the members, male and female, lit their pipes and settled down to have a good time. Joseph Entwisle, the "boy preacher," who was twice president, once whilst residing in Birmingham; a man of whom it was said that he had "scarcely a noticeable defect, unless it were the enviable one of excess of charity." And last, but not least, Samuel Bradburn, the shoemaker's apprentice, who became the "Demosthenes" of Methodism. He was said to be the finest orator of his day. Dr. Adam Clarke said he never heard his equal. He was appointed to Birmingham in 1797. The Rev. William Thompson, the first president after Wesley died, retired to Birmingham after 42 years of hard toil, and died here in 1799. A tablet to his memory is to be found in St. Mary's Church. Bradburn preached his funeral sermon in Cherry Street Chapel from the words "Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel!" The funeral procession was one of the largest ever seen in these days. More good stories are told of Bradburn than of almost any other Methodist preacher. He was often in very impecunious circumstances, for his stipend was very small, and his heart very large. On one occasion he wrote Mr. Wesley, laying before him a sorrowful account of

his straitened finances. Wesley, who was always kind to his lieutenants, sent him some £5 notes, with a brief letter which said:—"Dear Sammy—Trust in the Lord and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.—Yours affectionately, JOHN WESLEY." To which Bradburn replied: "Rev. and Dear Sir—I have often been struck with the beauty of the passage quoted in your letter, but I must confess that I never saw such useful expository notes upon it before—I am, Rev. and Dear Sir, your obedient and grateful servant, S. BRADBURN."

BIRMINGHAM TRANSFORMED.

We get some interesting glimpses of the way in which the itinerants got about the country in those days, and of the mishaps that befel them before road-making was reduced to a science. Wesley once chartered a coach to take him and 13 of his preachers from Bolton to Birmingham. They started out at twelve o'clock—midnight it would seem—hoping to reach their destination by five o'clock on the following day. But six divines inside and eight on the top was beyond the endurance of the machine solemnly licensed by Act of Parliament to carry any six persons who could get through the doorway, and before three in the morning it broke down. They patched it up and got on as far as Congleton, where they hired another; but this, too, before long broke down under this accumulated weight of divinity, and one of the horses was so tired that it could scarcely get along. It was seven when they reached Birmingham. A large congregation was awaiting Wesley; he stepped out of the coach, mounted the pulpit, and preached without any sense of fatigue. On another occasion his horse stuck fast in a quagmire when he was riding into Wednesbury; he got off, went on to his appointment, and left his friends to pull the poor beast out of the bog. Wesley had his eyes open on these varied journeys of his, and has left some interesting observations on men and things. He was surprised to be told that a good deal of platina was used in Birmingham, but he says upon inquiring he found it was not true platina, an original metal between gold and silver (being in weight nearest to gold, even as 18 to 19), but a mere compound of brass and spelter. From which it would appear it was not all gold that glittered in our famous city in those good old times. But what a change has come over Birmingham since Wesley rode into the town on that cold, dreary winter's day so long ago! When the Rea side was a pleasant walk for lovers on a summer's evening, and Colmore Row was covered with gardens; when Soho was a barren heath, and Snow Hill afforded a convenient place for drying the domestic linen on a washing day; when Paradise Street was a footpath through green fields, and cows grazed upon the site of the Town Hall; when New Street was a beast market, and Corporation Street a cherry orchard, the capital of the Midlands must have presented a different scene to the founder of Methodism from what it does to his followers on the occasion of their meeting here at the 151st yearly Conference.

No. 4.—BIRMINGHAM METHODISM: MODERN.

The Conference of the Wesleyan Methodists to be held in this city in the course of a few days makes the sixth held in Birmingham, the first being held here in 1836, when Dr. Bunting occupied the chair, that being the third time he had been called to that office by the suffrages of his brethren, an honour which had been conferred on no other preacher since the death of Wesley except Dr. Adam Clarke. The Rev. Robert Newton was elected secretary. Notwithstanding recent disturbances in the Connexion there was that year an increase of more than 2,000 members in the home societies, and over 8,000 on the

mission stations. The President announced that Mr. John Fernley, of Manchester, had offered £100 to the writer of the best essay on the scriptural claims and duties of the pastoral office as exercised among the Wesleyan Methodists, and an anonymous friend had offered the sum of £150 to purchase books for the theological institution. Over a hundred candidates were accepted for the ministry, nearly all of whom were appointed to circuits. Considerable interest was excited at the Conference by the presence there of John Sunday, a converted Indian from Canada, who had for some time been employed as a regular missionary among his brethren. It is rather a singular coincidence that whilst at the present Conference the question of Methodist bishops comes up for discussion, it was at the Conference held here in 1836 that it was decided to ordain the preachers by the imposition of hands. That first Conference was marked by harmony of deliberation, unanimity of views, and the deep interest attaching to the various services. The hospitality of the Birmingham people, not only among the Methodists, but shown also by Church people and Dissenters, was beyond all praise, and the brethren went to their several circuits after having had a "good time."

AN INTERESTING SOUVENIR.

To commemorate this first Birmingham Conference Dr. Melson had a medal struck. A full account of this commemoration was published in *Aris's Gazette* on Monday, August 1, 1835:—"A very beautifully executed medal has been published by Mr. Peart, of Bull Street, and Messrs. Edmund Heely and Co., of Union Street, to commemorate the 93rd annual Wesleyan Methodist Conference. On the obverse is a half-length figure of the Rev. John Wesley in the attitude of preaching; it is considered to be an admirable likeness. The reverse bears an inscription stating the names of the newly-elected president and secretary and the representatives for Ireland and America. The execution reflects great credit on Mr. Ottley." By the courtesy of Dr. Melson we have been able to reproduce this medal in the *Weekly Mercury*. The *Gazette* under date of August 8 also gives a lengthened report of a public breakfast meeting held in the Town Hall, when several able addresses were delivered by ministers and laymen who testified the respect and esteem of the Methodists of the town for the talents and usefulness of Dr. Bunting and the Rev. Robert Newton, to each of whom a gold medal was presented, that to Dr. Bunting by Dr. Melson, and the one to the Rev. Robert Newton by Mr. F. Heeley. A silver medal was also presented to each of the representatives from America and Ireland by Messrs. Beynon and Soutter. A similar token of respect at a subsequent period of the Conference was also shown to Mr. Reece, the late President, and Mr. Ryerson, from Canada. Dr. Melson had one of these silver medals in his possession until the last Birmingham Conference, when he gave it to Dr. Gregory.

In 1844 the Conference was again held in Birmingham, when Dr. Bunting was elected President for the fourth time—the only Methodist preacher who has ever had that honour—and the Rev. Robert Newton, by that time a D.D., was again secretary. There was no falling off in the hospitality of the Birmingham people since the former occasion, and the proceedings of the Conference are described as being "distinguished by unbroken harmony and affection equal to any that preceded it." Although many new societies had been formed and several new chapels built in the interval, notably Wesley Chapel, Constitution Hill, in 1838, there were still only two circuits and seven ministers in the town, the same as at the Conference of 1836, but the number of members had increased from 2,418 to 3,169. At the third Conference held here, in 1854, when the Rev. John Farrar was President, the number of circuits and ministers was the same, but the membership had

dropped down to 2,591, which finds its explanation in the fact that between the second and third Conference the Connexion was rent asunder by

THE GREAT REFORM AGITATION,

and lost, between the years 1852 and 1856, over 40,000 members. That agitation was not without its effect upon Birmingham Methodism, as is evident from a leaders' meeting held at Cherry Street on January 2 and 3, 1851, the minutes of which we transcribe. On that occasion the Rev. James Methley was in the chair. "Present—Rev. G. B. Macdonald, Rev. E. Brice, Rev. T. Green, Rev. J. Heaton, Messrs. Whitaker, Seymour, McTurk, Heely, Kent, Tom Rinson, Jones, Walch, Warlow, Parker, Lee, English, Messrs. Cope and Turner. This meeting was specially convened to hear the appeal of Messrs. Cope and Turner against their suspension when the Rev. G. B. Macdonald met their classes, the grounds alleged for their suspension being:—1st, their avowed and notorious connection with an organisation in this town and elsewhere which under the name of Reform Association is producing opposition and strife in the Church of Christ by systematic agitation; 2nd, their violation of the compact into which they entered when they joined the Methodist Society, that if they could afford it they would keep our rule as to weekly and quarterly contributions in their classes for the support of the Gospel in the circuit in which they resided. In the case of Brother Cope, it was alleged, also, thirdly, his own distinct avowal, made to the Rev. G. B. Macdonald when meeting his class, that he did not consider him to be his minister because he declared that in his judgment the decisions and regulations of the last Conference were binding upon him. The case was submitted to the meeting by the Rev. G. Macdonald at considerable length, and fully replied to by Messrs. Cope and Turner, and when put to the meeting by the Chairman it was declared that the charges were fully proven. It was also resolved—1st, 'That the Rev. G. B. Macdonald be requested to publish this statement of the case of Messrs. Cope and Turner, with the charges preferred against them, as early as practicable.' Resolved—2nd, 'That this meeting records its sense of the propriety with which the proceedings in the investigation of the case of Messrs. Cope and Turner have been conducted on the part of the Rev. James Methley as chairman and the Rev. G. B. Macdonald who preferred the charges, and tenders its thanks to them for the kind forbearance and discretion manifested during the protracted and painful meetings.' Mr. Macdonald's statement of this case was published in a pamphlet of 39 pages, printed by Richard Peart and Son, of Bull Street, a copy of which is now before us. By the fourth Conference held here in 1865, when the veteran missionary, the Rev. William Shaw, was President, Birmingham Methodism had nearly recovered from the effects of the Reform agitation. New chapels had been built at Bristol Road (1854), Summer Hill (1859), and Aston Villa (1864). The circuits had increased from two to three; there were 10 ministers instead of seven; and the number of members had gone up to 3,151, or just 100 less than at the first Birmingham Conference. From that time down to the last Conference here in 1879, when Dr. Gregory was President, Methodism had steadily increased in the town, both in material prosperity and numerical strength; several new chapels had been built, the three circuits had been divided into six, there were 16 ministers on the ground instead of 10, and the number of members had risen from 3,151 to 4,359.

THE LIBERALITY OF METHODISTS.

In tracing the growth of the organisation during the last 15 years we are struck with the enterprise and liberality of the Methodist people. During that period Handsworth College has been built. On Tuesday, June 9, 1880, memorial stones were laid by Dr.

Gregory (President of the Conference), Sir Francis Lyceet, Mr. William Mewburn (Banbury), Mr. Isaac Jenks (Wolverhampton), and Mr. James Wood (Southport). Messrs. Ball and Goddard were the architects, and Mr. W. H. Parton the builder. This stately edifice was opened on November 2, 1881. Dr. Osborne delivered the inaugural address and preached on the occasion. In the afternoon the governor of the institution, the Rev. John Hartley, presided at a luncheon, and addresses were delivered by Dr. R. W. Dale, who "expressed the hearty satisfaction with which all the evangelical churches of Birmingham regarded that new manifestation of the enduring life and power of Methodism;" and Mr. H. H. Fowler, M.P., who saw in the establishment promise of good service, not only to the Methodist Church, but to the Catholic Church at large. A subsequent meeting was held, presided over by Mr. T. Barnsley, and addressed by the Rev. E. E. Jenkins, M.A. At the evening meeting, with Mr. J. Brewer in the chair, Dr. Rigg said "that day was without a parallel in the history of Methodism," and stated that the building was the finest by a great deal that the Methodists possessed in institution buildings. The speaker also eulogised the services of the indefatigable secretary, the Rev. J. E. Clapham. The entire cost of the building has been over £40,000. It provides accommodation for 70 students. The first appointments were:—The Rev. John Hartley, governor; the Rev. Robert N. Young, classical tutor; the Rev. F. W. Macdonald, theological tutor; and the Rev. W. Foster, mathematical tutor. The Princess Alice Orphanage is closely enough related to Birmingham Methodism to be noticed in this review. In connection with the Wesleyan Thanksgiving Fund, Mr. Solomon Jevons made a munificent offer to the committee of £10,000, on condition that they supplemented it by £10,000 more, towards establishing an orphanage in the neighbourhood of this city. The offer was accepted; plans were prepared by Mr. J. L. Ball for as much of the building as it was proposed immediately to erect; the contract was let to Messrs. J. Wilson and Son, of Handsworth; the sanction of the Queen was obtained to call the building the "Princess Alice" Orphanage, in memory of her lamented daughter; a site was chosen near to the Beggar's Bush, about half-way between Erdington and Sutton Coldfield; and the stone was laid on September 19, 1882, by Mr. Samuel Jevons, son of the generous donor. Alderman Avery (the Mayor) presented him with a silver trowel, bearing a suitable inscription, on behalf of the committee, and the Rev. G. O. Bate, the representative of the Children's Home in London, presented him with an elegantly-designed mallet. When the scheme is complete it will consist of 12 cottages, six for boys and six for girls, each capable of containing 25 children. There are schools and workshops, with facilities for carrying on about a dozen industries. The main block was formally opened July 18, 1884. Since that time the following homes have been completed:—"Marsh" Memorial Home, for 25 boys, built in 1885-86, from funds presented by Mr. Edward Marsh, of Walsall (£5,000;—£1,000 for building and furnishing the home, and £4,000 as a partial endowment; "Shaftesbury" Home, for 25 girls, built from the Foundation Fund, and opened in 1886; "Copeley" Home, for 25 girls, the gift of Miss James, of Leamington, who presented £3,000—£1,000 for building, &c., and £2,000 for endowment—opened in 1889 (the little hospital was the gift of the same lady, and opened in July, 1891); "Seymour" Home, for 25 boys, erected from a legacy of £1,000, left by Mrs. Seymour, of Handsworth, and opened in 1892. The "McArthur Schools," erected from a legacy of £1,000, left by the late Sir William McArthur, and opened at the same time as the "Seymour Home." A fifth home, called "Meriden Home," for boys, is in course of erection out of a legacy of £3,000, left by the late Mr. Meriden, of Wolverhampton. The

memorial-stone is to be unveiled by the Lord Bishop of Worcester on July 20.

CHERRY STREET CHAPEL.

At the last Conference Old Cherry Street was standing—Old Cherry Street, the centre of so many Methodist associations and traditions, the scene of so many Methodist struggles, from whose pulpit the greatest Methodist orators preached, and in whose pews the fathers and mothers of the present generation of Methodists worshipped God—it was still standing, but old, dingy, and forsaken, stranded there among narrow streets and overshadowing warehouses, a withered and shrivelled memorial of the "superb house" standing among the cherry orchards in which the venerable Wesley had preached some 97 years before. Visitors from all parts of the world went to see Old Cherry Street, just as to-day they go to see City Road Chapel, Bunhill Fields, and the Moravian Chapel in Fetter Lane. But the venerable old fane is gone, and the place thereof knows it no more for ever. On or about the site where it stood for 100 years, the visitors to the Conference of 1894 will find the offices of the Prudential Insurance Society and the well-stocked premises of the Public Benefit Boot and Shoe Company; so ruthless, so un-sentimental, so iconoclastic is the hand of time, or rather the hand of Corporations bent upon improvement. "To what base uses!" exclaims the Methodist visitor from the States, or the Antipodes, who has just paid a hasty visit to Stratford-on-Avon. Cherry Street was wanted for city improvements. The Corporation offered the trustees a site of 900 yards in Corporation Street, and upon the valuation of Mr. Thomas Barnsley gave them £10,050 towards the new building. Cherry Street was last used for public worship on Sunday, June 27, 1886, when Dr. Melson preached Sunday school sermons in it to crowded congregations. The next morning the work of demolition commenced. The new Central Hall was opened September, 1887, and cost £12,000. It was built by Mr. Bowen, of Small Heath, from the plans of Messrs. Osborne and Redding. Under the superintendence of the Rev. F. L. Wiseman the new building is the centre of much earnest evangelistic work, which is touching for good the neighbourhood about. There are several branches connected with it upon which large sums of money have been spent—notably the old Sea Horse, a well-known hostelry of former days, has been secured for mission purposes. The late Mr. Thomas Wallis Holdsworth, whose tablet is in the chapel, was largely instrumental in building the new place in Corporation Street. We cannot but think, however, that for £12,000 the Birmingham Methodists might have made provision, as in the new premises in Manchester, for holding the Conference.

FIFTEEN YEARS' EXPENDITURE.

During the last 15 years over £70,000 have been raised in the various circuits in the way of building and paying off chapel debts. Since the formation of Moseley Road into a circuit in 1885 Lime Grove Schools have been built at a cost of £2,400; a new church has been built at Sparkhill at a cost of £5,000; a school chapel has been built at King's Heath costing £2,100; a mission has been acquired at Knutsford Street at an outlay of £400, and the debt on Moseley Road Chapel has been reduced by £500, making a total for the circuit of £10,200. In the Belmont Row Circuit a new chapel has been built at Acock's Green at a cost of £1,200, and another at Saltley at a further outlay of £1,426; new schools and a caretaker's house have been erected at Coventry Road costing £1,628; a new organ has been put into the Coventry Road Chapel at a further cost of £450; there have been renovations in various parts of the circuit to the amount of £4,481; repayment of loans and paying off debts £3,573 more; total for the circuit, £12,760. Bradford Street is included in these returns up to 1889,

when it was handed over to the Mission. In the Newtown Row (now the Aston Park) Circuit, at Lichfield Road, £1,015 have been raised for alterations, &c., and paying off debts; at Erdington, £1,513; at Nechells, £1,125; at Newtown Row, £377; whilst at different times sums have been raised at Birchfields, Perry Barr, Sutton Coldfield, and Stockland Green for payment to Chapel Committee amounting to £3,850. Total for the circuit, £7,880. In the Wesley Circuit, the "Asbury" Chapel has been erected, costing £4,462; schools have been built at Aston Villa and Nineveh at an outlay of £3,340; the Wesley people have spent £350 on an organ; debts have been paid to the amount of £6,118 18s. 9d. A new chapel has been recently opened in Somerset Road at a cost of £2,000; and a new mission hall scheme is now in hand at Lozells, which will involve an outlay of £4,000. Total for the circuit, £20,370 18s. 9d. In the Islington Circuit a chapel has been built at Sandon Road at a cost of £5,000; a debt of £2,000 has been removed from the Islington Chapel; there has been a further outlay there of £800 on an organ, and in renovating the place; the premises in Stirling Road cost in all £3,100; the Fillongley Chapel cost £1,000; £600 have been spent on the premises at Icknield Square, and another £100 on the school at Quinton; they have on hand at Islington and Sandon Road a further extension and renovation scheme which will cost £2,100 more. Total for the circuit, £14,700. The Bristol Road Circuit was divided from Islington in 1884. Since then the chapel at Bristol Road has been cleaned, new schools and an organ have been put up at Harborne, and at present a new scheme is in hand there involving an outlay altogether of more than £3,700. In the Smethwick Circuit they have raised for chapel and school erections, alterations, and paying off debts about £4,220. These figures do not include several smaller items of expenditure which have added to the value of the several trusts, nor the money spent upon the three branches of the Birmingham Mission, all of which have been started since the Conference of 1879. Special mention should be made in connection with the mission of the "Harold Barnsley" Memorial Hall, erected at a cost of £1,000, the gift of Mr. Thomas Barnsley, in memory of his late son. At the last Conference there were six circuits in Birmingham, 19 ministers, and 4,394 Church members; at present there are eight circuits, including the missions, 25 ministers in full work, besides the college staff, seven supernumeraries, with 5,969 members, being an increase of 1,575 since the last Conference here. A member of Parliament once viewing some stately Methodist premises which had been raised at a great cost and free of debt, exclaimed, "The Methodists ought to pay off the National Debt!" We will not vouch for their ability to tackle such a gigantic undertaking as that, although of late years they have raised enormous sums to pay off debts upon chapels built by their fathers; but the figures we have been able to present, connected with their work here during the last 15 years, bear witness to the enterprise of the Birmingham Methodists and to the enduring vitality of Birmingham Methodism.

No. 5.—INFLUENCE OF METHODISM ON THE CHURCH.

The permanent value of a religious revival is to be judged, not only by the moral and social improvements which follow in its wake, but also by the warmer, intenser, and more robust life which it breathes into existing religious organisations and institutions. Judged in this way the religious movement of the eighteenth century has had far-reaching issues which its original promoters never contemplated, but by which they have laid the whole Christian world under obligations which are at length recognised. Mr. Lecky, who will not be suspected of

undue leanings towards the movement, says:— "Although the career of the elder Pitt and the splendid victories by land and sea that were won during his ministry form unquestionably the most dazzling episodes in the reign of George II., they must yield, I think, in real importance, to that religious revolution which shortly before had been begun in England by the preachings of the Wesleys and of Whitfield. The creation of a large, powerful, and active sect, extending over both hemispheres, and numbering many millions of souls, was but one of its consequences. It also exercised a profound and lasting influence upon the spirit of the Established Church, upon the amount and distribution of the moral forces of the nation, and even upon the course of its political history." And after noticing some of the extravagances which characterised the early developments of the revival, he says of Wesley, "It is no exaggeration to say that he has had a wider constructive influence in the sphere of practical religion than any other man who has appeared since the sixteenth century."

ANGLICANISM A CENTURY AGO.

Rightly to appreciate the influence which Methodism has had upon the Established Church, we must glance at the general character of the clergy, and the decay of the religious life of the Church from the Restoration down to the formation of the "Holy Club" at Oxford. Bishop Burnet, in his old age, said that ember-weeks were the grief and burden of his life, as the men who came for ordination seemed never to have read the scriptures, and were unable to give a tolerable account even of the Catechism itself. Archbishop Secker says that Christianity was ridiculed and railed at with very little reserve, and its teachers without any at all. Southey tells us that the clergy had lost both authority and respect. That this should have been the case is hardly to be wondered at when Crabbe, the poet, who was also a clergyman, has given us a description of the typical parson of the age, who was in the saddle five days in the week, passed his nights at the alehouse in card-playing and drinking, and postponed the burial service for the dead, who had been interred during the week, until the following Sunday. Leighton says the Church was a fair carcass without a spirit. Thackeray has left us a graphic picture of the Queen's chaplains mumbling through their morning office in their ante-room, under the picture of the great Venus, with the door opening into the adjoining chamber where the Queen is dressing, talking scandal to Lord Hervey, or uttering sneers to Lady Suffolk—the King's mistress—who is kneeling with the basin at the Queen's side. Lecky says that the Universities had fallen into a condition of great moral and intellectual decrepitude. Subscription to the Articles was a farce; no less a man than Middleton ridiculed them even when he signed them to obtain a living. The discipline of the Church was so lax that Swift was promoted to the Deanery of St. Patrick's notwithstanding his treatment of "Stella" and the obscenity of his pen; and Goldsmith might have been ordained to the cure of souls if he had not frightened the Bishop by presenting himself for the sacred office in a blazing pair of scarlet breeches! To complete the sad record, Mr. Gladstone says, "That the preaching of the Gospel a hundred years ago had disappeared, not by denial, but by lapse, from the majority of Anglican pulpits, is, I fear, in large measure, an historic truth." There were here and there good and devoted men who kept alive the flame of piety in the midst of spiritual darkness, such as Fletcher, of Madeley; Venn, of Huddersfield; Grimshaw, of Howarth; Taylor, of Quinton; Romaine, of St. Dunstons; and others who might be named, who co-operated with the Wesleys in their efforts to rouse their slumbering brethren, but who remained loyal sons of the Church. In Goldsmith's pastor of the "Deserted Village" and the "Vicar of Wakefield," we find charming pictures of the

better side of the clerical life of the eighteenth century. There were vigorous intellects, too, men who were quite capable of measuring swords with the ablest sceptics and freethinkers of those unbelieving times. Butler and Berkeley, Whiston and Clarke, Hoadley and Leslie, Warburton and Sherlock—although some of them not of the finest flavour of orthodoxy—were men who, from an intellectual point of view, would have done honour to the Church in any age. But all these, notwithstanding, by the unanimous testimony of her most loyal and devoted sons, the Church had sunk to the lowest state of spiritual efficiency, and good men became alarmed at the ruin they saw hanging over the Establishment. There were many pious men, but few saints; there were many accomplished scholars, some of whom were promoted to bishoprics for translating "naughty Greek plays," but few earnest preachers of the Cross; there were many keen intellects, able and ready to defend Revealed Religion, but the age was lamentably deficient in men who were dying to save souls.

WESLEY AND HIS ARTICLES.

That was just the spirit wanted to save the Church from the Deism and Latitudinarianism which threatened it from within, and the indifference and infidelity which threatened it from without. Methodism was no new departure from primitive Christianity or from the recognised standards of the reformed faith; it simply recovered the great doctrines of the Church from the lapse and desuetude into which they had fallen, and gave a practical and a popular exposition of them from the Land's End to John o' Groat's. Whatever vagaries Wesley may be charged with in his modes of operation, no one can accuse him of heresy in matters of faith. The author of the life of Cicero might treat the Articles with ridicule whilst in the act of signing them in order to obtain a living, but to Wesley, whether living or no living, those same articles were matters of vital importance. He knew what they contained as well as any man then living, much better than some of his brethren who incited the ignorant mob to pelt him with rotten eggs and dead cats. On one occasion a serious clergyman asked him in what points the Methodists differed from the Church of England. His answer was: "To the best of my knowledge in none. The doctrines we preach are the doctrines of the Church of England; indeed, the fundamental doctrines of the Church, clearly laid down, both in her Prayers, Articles, and Homilies." The awful fact of sin, the corruption of human nature, the need of a Saviour, redemption by Jesus Christ, justification by faith alone, the operation of the Holy Ghost upon the heart, future rewards and punishments—such were the themes upon which the early Methodists dwelt, and by which they won back the neglected masses to penitence and prayer. These are doctrines to be found in the Articles and Homilies of the Church, but they were scarcely referred to in the Anglican preaching of those days. But ever since the 18th Century movement these doctrines have gradually been finding their way back into the Church of England pulpits, and in our time distinct prominence is given to them by all teachers of the Evangelical school.

To the Methodist movement we must also ascribe that revival of fervour and enthusiasm which characterises the preaching of the modern clergy. A preacher was once holding forth to a bucolic congregation in a Devonshire village on a sultry summer's evening, when most of his congregation fell asleep. Stopping in the midst of his discourse he rapped the book-board and shouted, "Bide home and sleep, bide home and sleep; what did you come here to sleep for?" One slumbering Hodge lazily opened his eyes, and looking up at the indignant preacher said, "Thee can't keep me awaake." Eighteenth Century preaching would have kept nobody awake—it was sober, prosy,

and dull to the last degree, a style of preaching we once heard a Birmingham Methodist describe as "Mästerly, but droy." Extempore preaching had died out. Any appeal to the emotions, whilst demanded on the stage, was laughed at in the pulpit; any show of earnestness was tabooed as being vulgar. Voltaire describes the English sermon as a "solid but sometimes dry dissertation which a man reads to the people without gesture and without any particular exaltation of the voice." The Revs. Messrs. Aitkin and Knox Little, and a host of others among the modern clergy, who make fervent and impassioned appeals to the conscience, would have found as little favour in those days as did the Wesleys and Whitfield. But all that is changed. There are sermons delivered under the dome of St. Paul's as hot and as pointed as any ever delivered in the humblest Primitive Methodist meeting house, and a style of preaching has become popular in the Church which would simply have scandalised fastidious Church-people a hundred and twenty years ago.

CHURCH PRAISE.

In nothing perhaps is the influence of Methodism to be seen more clearly in the Church than in the improvement it introduced into public worship, notably in the musical part of it. A distinguished German scholar has said that "the prophet, in order to take deep root in the life of the people, must become a psalmist." Nobody understood this better than the Wesleys. There were very few decent hymns in common use down to the time of the Revival. The precious productions of Sternhold and Hopkins, and afterwards of Tate and Brady, were regularly used in parish churches, and some of them merited the not very complimentary epithet Wesley bestowed upon them when he described them as "miserable scandalous doggerel." Imagine an intelligent congregation pouring forth its praise to Heaven in the following version of the "Gloria, laus, et honor":—

Be thou, O Lord, the rider,
And we the little ass,
That to God's holy city
Together we may pass.

If ever composition deserved the epithet of scandalous doggerel, surely it was that. Nor was the music any better than the poetry. The tunes were for the most part of local manufacture, displaying the most extraordinary ingenuity, but which mutilated sentiments already awkward enough in their native doggerel. Wesley must have witnessed some amusing scenes, if we may judge from what he says of the "poor hum-drum wretch who can scarcely read what he drones out with such an air of importance," and of "the formal drawl of the parish clerk, with the screaming boys who bawl out what they neither feel nor understand." It was under such circumstances that the Prophet became Psalmist. Wesley ransacked French, Spanish, and German literature for hymns suitable for public worship; the best English hymn-writers, too, such as Dodderidge and Watts, were laid under contribution; and for 40 years Charles Wesley continued to pour forth a stream of original hymns, some of which are universally acknowledged to be the finest in the language. Whilst improving the hymnology Wesley saw the importance of improving the music as well. As early as 1742 he issued a selection of tunes to be sung at the Foundry, and this was followed by other musical works, both technical and popular, calculated to improve the singing in public worship. The work which the two brothers did in this respect has become the common heritage of the Church, whilst others have caught from them an inspiration by which they have enriched the language with the noblest and most spiritual compositions. Lyte, Ray Palmer, Miss Elliott, Miss Steele, Bishop Heber, Keble, Bishop Wordsworth, Dean Stanley, and many others who have made such valuable contributions to the Psalmody of the Church have all come under the

influence of that revival of sacred song which did so much to extend and popularise the Methodist movement.

These are some of the direct ways in which Methodism has influenced the Church; indirectly that influence, perhaps, has been even more far-reaching still. It roused the Establishment from its latitudinarian slumber, and breathed into it a spirit of zeal, of energy, and of sacrifice which has simply revolutionised it. By the unanimous confession of Churchmen of all cults, the Church of England of to-day, with its aggressive movements, and in its elasticity to adapt itself to the rapid thought of this versatile age, is largely indebted to that revival which liberated it from the bonds of tradition and formalism. No Bishop would complain to-day, as the Bishop of London of those days did, "that as the result of Wesley's teaching Methodists were flocking to the Holy Communion in such numbers that parish parsons had no time to dine comfortably before afternoon service." We venture to assert that, if all the Methodists assembling at the forthcoming Conference were to agree to take the Holy Communion in the church in the Bull Ring, where Charles Wesley's preaching was once drowned in a peal of bells, the local clergy would gladly dispense the sacred elements to them even if they went without dinner altogether. During the last hundred years vast numbers of the clergy have caught Wesley's spirit, imbibed his principles, adopted many of his methods, have devoted themselves to their work in a spirit of sacrifice not unworthy of his own, and, like him, have remained to the last true and devoted sons of the Church. One of our best known and most noteworthy Bishops has declared that he is a "High Church Methodist." Very few clergymen to-day, we imagine, would regard open-air preaching as a very grave irregularity, or deny to laymen the right to give a Gospel address. Indeed, in connection with the afternoon movement, we have heard of Nonconformist laymen giving addresses from the lectern in parish churches; and at the centenary celebrations one of the London papers stated that a movement was on foot to form a "John Wesley Society in the Church itself in order to vindicate the right of her laymen to preach the Gospel even in her sacred fane." In fact, the powerful competition of the Wesleyan body has given an immense stimulus to Churchmen. Without sacrificing any great principle, it has led them to adjust their methods and agencies to the requirements of the times. With a well-defined parochial system, they have found room for the valuable services of such eminent evangelists as Messrs. Haslam and Aitkin, men who preach a "present salvation" with all the earnestness and fervour of the early Methodist preachers. Without neglecting the cultured and the wealthy classes, they are doing the rough work of Salvationists in the courts and slums of our larger centres of population. And during the last 50 years they have put into their work a life and energy by which the Church has strengthened her hold upon the great mass of the English people, and has become more effective for good than at any time since the Reformation.

The one grievance of Churchmen, of course, is that Methodism should ever have been lost to the Church. Wesley himself never did separate from the Church; he lived and died in her Communion. We shall not discuss here the cause or causes of that ultimate separation, whether they arose out of want of elasticity and comprehensiveness on the part of the Church, or whether they arose out of elements indigenous to the revival from the first. It should be remembered that there has been a large Dissenting party in Methodism from the commencement, and it is to be doubted whether any scheme of comprehension could have been framed on the part of the Church that could have kept that section permanently within her Communion. But looking at the matter

from a practical point of view, we doubt whether the great moral and social results of this work could have been accomplished if the movement had been confined within the limits of the Establishment. There has been a spirit of honourable rivalry which has done wonderful things, but which, perhaps, would have been wanting if the operations had been directed entirely from within the Church. It should be noted, too, that the great religious awakening of the 18th century was largely due, not only to Wesley and the excellent clergymen who co-operated with him, but also to uneducated laymen who left the plough, the cobbler's stool, the anvil, and the trowel to preach the Gospel. And if the Church could have opened her doors wide enough to have included Wesley, she could not at that time have tolerated all the irregularities of Wesley's lay helpers, and yet we may safely say that Methodism could never have done its great work without the labours of such men as John Nelson, Thomas Olivers, Thomas Hanby, John Pawson, Samuel Bradburn, and other well-known names in the Methodist calendar. It has been said that if Wesley had been met half way by the bishops and clergy he would never have been known as the founder of a sect. Perhaps not, and perhaps, too, the Methodist Society might have run to seed within the Church, as similar societies did before it, and the real religious awakening of England might have been postponed for another hundred years. It is useless discussing such "ifs." But any such half-way arrangement was hardly possible; the time was not ripe for it. In an age when the Church was in the bonds of tradition and formalism, it would not have found a place for men whose power and success lay in a "direct appeal to the individual soul founded on personal experience." But we understand such matters better in these days. Institutions come to their true condition through a series of gradual developments, Churches among them. If another Wesley were to arise in the Church he would be granted a roving commission, and would find thousands of hearty and earnest co-operators among his brethren. But such men are only born at long intervals. For another Wesley we shall have to wait. Meanwhile we are grateful to the man whose work has had such an abiding influence upon the world in general, and upon the Church of England in particular.

No. 6.—A METHODIST EPISCOPATE.

Just 100 years ago, in the spring of 1794, eight strangers, of quiet demeanour and in clerical attire, assembled at an inn in the quiet, drowsy little city of Lichfield. They should have assembled at Birmingham, but for reasons which shall presently be explained. Their meetings were so secret, and there was such an air of mystery about their proceedings, that at length the suspicions of the gossips of this ancient city of St. Chad's were aroused. Who were these strangers? What was their business? What was the meaning of these secret conclaves at the inn? There was much political excitement in the country just then, it was at the time of the French Revolution, and fearful things were being done on the other side of the Channel. The Cathedral at Lichfield had already suffered fearful havoc during the civil wars, and it might be that there was another Lord Brook disguised among those black-coated strangers preparing plans to direct his cannons against their venerable fane. Under these circumstances it is scarcely to be wondered that the inhabitants of the leisurely little city, who had little to do except watch the proceedings of other people, should have been excited into a mild flutter by this strange gathering in their midst. The officials of the city received orders to watch them, and had it not been for the timely arrival of a commercial traveller to town to whom several of them were known they might have been ignominiously consigned to Lichfield Gaol,

But the suspicions of the city fathers were entirely groundless, for those eight strangers were neither Jacobins nor Sansculottists; they were simply eight loyal, law-abiding Methodist preachers, who, having been considerably exercised in their minds by the fact that Methodism had no properly-defined ecclesiastical polity, had met together in this quiet way to discuss the possibility of arranging a constitution upon an episcopal basis. With this view they drew up a set of resolutions to be laid before the forthcoming Conference at Bristol. Meanwhile the secret gathering at Lichfield got wind throughout the Connexion. Some gentlemen who had not been invited raised a great cry against the self-elected bishops, and the excitement became intense. The Conference denounced the proposals in sweeping terms, and passed a vote that none of the Lichfield propositions should be brought forward or noticed, as they tended to create invidious and unhallowed distinctions among brethren. So collapsed the first attempt to form a Methodist Episcopacy. "We had upon the whole," writes Pawson, "an agreeable, but very expensive, journey. It cost above £9." Bradburn, who was one of the bishops-elect, and who was not without a sense of humour in such matters, observed that the secret conclave held its first meeting on the first of April. Birmingham was first mentioned as the place in which to discuss this abortive scheme, but Lichfield was ultimately chosen as the more favourable place because there were no Methodists there, and the simple souls thought that they would be able to formulate their little plan without its becoming known.

It is somewhat in the nature of a coincidence that the second scheme for a Methodist Episcopacy should be brought forward at a Birmingham Conference. But if we can form a judgment from the temper in which the proposal has been received throughout the Connexion, the second Bishop's scheme is likely to end as ignominiously, if not as comically, as the first. The objectors are furious against it, and its promoters seem half alarmed at the spirit which they have aroused. The cry of "No Bishops" has been taken up as savagely and as fanatically as the old cry of "No Popery"; and although we do not always find ourselves in agreement with that versatile genius Mr. Price Hughes, yet it seems to us that he describes the opposition to it correctly when he says that it arises from a "dislike of authority." Since Dr. Rigg's now celebrated scheme of "Separated Chairmen of Districts" was given to the Connexion, it is said that his plan does not bear the construction which its objectors have given to it. Indeed, both the Doctor and his supporters most earnestly disclaim any attempt to create a new clerical order in Methodism, and justify their proposal upon the ground that a superintendent is already a bishop in the New Testament sense of the word. But the dissenting spirits in Methodism are not to be caught napping, they can smell clericalism like the war-horse can smell battle when it is far off. And that they should scent a new clerical order in this proposal is not to be marvelled at when the worthy Doctor's ecclesiastical proclivities are borne in mind. Dr. Rigg is as extensively read in ecclesiastical history, and as well acquainted with the growth of ecclesiastical organisations probably as any man alive. He has published a very able work on church organisation in which he has pointed out, most clearly as we think, that the functions originally exercised by the New Testament Bishops in the Primitive Church gradually developed in natural and orderly sequence until they found expression in a new order of diocesan bishops who had "unquestioned superiority over presbyters;" and that as early as the second century there were three ecclesiastical orders—Bishops, Presbyters, and Deacons. If the Doctor had not written so ably and so sympathetically on this subject it is possible that those who

dislike authority—unless exercised by themselves—might not have discovered a new ecclesiastical order under the modest designation of "Separated Chairmen of Districts." But the Doctor has revealed his hand, and we are afraid he will lose the game. He is evidently of opinion that "administrative necessity or convenience" requires a new order in the Methodist organisation; and although he and his supporters repudiate the notion of investing this new order with prerogatives and dignities corresponding to those belonging to diocesan bishops in the Anglican Church, yet the suspicion has been aroused that in this proposal there is a covert design to foist upon the Connexion a new ecclesiastical order of undefined and unknown powers.

We by no means join in the hue and cry with which a certain section of the Methodist community has greeted this scheme. Apart from our gratification at seeing so influential and so scholarly a section of the Methodist Church indicating a disposition for a closer approximation to the polity of the Anglican Church, we are of opinion that Dr. Rigg's scheme, or something like it, is rendered necessary by the present exigencies of the Connexion. At present, through whatever cause, Methodism is practically stationary in this country. There is a vast amount of activity of various kinds, a great deal of it misdirected we are afraid, but the numerical returns from year to year bear no proportion to the extent of the organisation or to the number of agents employed. In many of the country districts it is a well-known fact that the work is in a languishing condition, disheartening to the last degree to those who have to carry it on; whilst in the town centres, notwithstanding the efforts of the Forward movement, the churches are barely able to hold their own owing to the population moving out into the suburbs. Methodism, it is said, is too conservative, is not sufficiently elastic, is not in touch with the spirit of the age, and that its institutions want putting upon a more democratic basis. There has been a considerable liberalising process going on of late years, indeed we don't see how Methodism can go much further in the liberal direction without yielding up all the functions which belong to the pastorate. Laymen now form an integral part of the Conference, a very wise and reasonable arrangement, quite in harmony with the spirit of the constitution; but we cannot see that the great legislative measure which was introduced at Bradford 16 years ago has quickened the spiritual life of the Connexion or strengthened its hold upon the working classes of the country. The extreme democratic polity which finds such an able exposition in Mr. Perks's very vigorous but very intemperate pamphlet, has been tried for more than 40 years in the more radical splits and offshoots of Methodism, but we doubt whether the results of such impulsive and irregular movements justify any further experiments in that direction. An old Yorkshire Methodist, who had been carried away from his own Church when the cry of "Stop the supplies" was raised, but who afterwards returned, was asked why he did not remain with the new movement. "Ah, lad," he said, "its bad paster dään i' yon loin." We cannot speak of the quality of the pastures to be found in democratic Methodism, having never tried them; but after having had unlimited opportunities of proving the merits of their "irregular principles" for nearly half-a-century, it does not seem to us that the democratic polity of Radical Methodism is more fruitful of the desired results than the more cautious and conservative polity of the old body.

We hear a great deal in these days about priestly intolerance, ecclesiastical tyranny, &c., but human nature is human nature whether under a Bishop's mitre or under a layman's chimney-pot hat, and given that the pericranium that is covered with the mitre is the more cultured of the two, it is likely that the

tyranny in the former case will be less oppressive and offensive than in that of the latter. Genius, of course, like water, always finds its level, but we cannot conceive of any public teacher who is worth his salt submitting to such rude impertinences and such vulgar tyranny as may be found here and there in democratic Methodism. Tyranny is not necessarily a fruit indigenous to the episcopal office—although if human nature is unregenerate in the person of a bishop it is as likely to be found there as anywhere else—it may be found among men who abjure all regular ecclesiastical forms, and who glory in the “irregular principles of dissent.” We doubt not that Mr. Perks exercises the powers which he possesses as a prominent and influential layman, with a due regard to the feelings of the minister who may happen to be the chairman of his quarterly meeting, and generally in the spirit of a Christian gentleman, which is but natural, he being the son of a very able and a much esteemed Methodist preacher; but we have known a Methodist layman who had the questionable taste to twit the minister who was seated at his own board with his inability to write a decent letter, and who held him up to ridicule before the assembled guests by exposing his infirmities in the matter of orthography. The “irregular principles of dissent” are no effectual safeguards against the very worst abuses which Mr. Perks associates with an episcopal form of Church government. There are lords in God’s heritage among the laity as well as among the clergy; for our own part we prefer the latter. Mr. Perks is very caustic on the bishops, who “live in lordly splendour” whilst “hundreds of their clergy endure a scarcely disguised poverty.” But is it not a fact that there are dissenting ministers enjoying eight hundred (a thousand, twelve hundred, and even more a year, whilst many of their poorer brethren with large families to support can barely keep body and soul together upon the scanty pittance they receive. These unequal financial positions are due to no particular forms of ecclesiastical polity; they simply show that in the Church as in secular professions the ablest men as a rule find the best places; and whilst a more equal distribution of the revenues of the Church would be a very just and righteous thing, yet we think we could name bishops who make as good a use of their £5,000 a year as certain dissenting ministers do of their £1,000.

But we are not concerned to defend the Anglican Episcopacy against the “irregular principles of dissent.” Episcopal form of Church government, as Macaulay’s schoolboy knows very well, goes back to Apostolic times, while the dissenting polity is a much more recent creation. What we want to know is, how are the Methodists going to provide for full and efficient administration in the vast organisation? Will they adopt some such scheme as that suggested by Dr. Rigg, which is in perfect harmony with the constitutional principles of the Connexion, and along the Episcopal lines, or will they get scared by this absurd cry of “No Bishops,” and drift yet further away from John Wesley’s idea into undefined and “irregular principles?” That something should be done to secure better synodical administration is evident, for at present a chairman has no influence corresponding to the office he holds, there are circuits in the districts which some of them never see, and they are little better than decent figureheads presiding over the two annual meetings held in May and September. Without committing ourselves to Dr. Rigg’s scheme until it is more fully and more definitely elaborated, we have long been of opinion that for a chairman of a District Synod to discharge all the functions which should properly belong to such an office he ought to be set free from all circuit work. The present arrangement involves an injustice to the chairman, to the circuit of which he may be the superintendent, and to the district. No man can do justice to himself who has a large circuit to

look after, and who in addition is held responsible for the effective administration of the district over which he presides. It is a great disadvantage for a circuit to have for its superintendent a man who is necessarily so much away from home as a chairman must be if he is to keep himself in touch with what is going on throughout his district. Nor would it be a satisfactory solution of the matter for the chairman to have an assistant. The Birmingham and Shrewsbury District is a large district, with many poor struggling circuits in it, requiring all the encouragement and sympathy which a large-hearted and enterprising chairman can give. The Wesley Circuit is a large circuit, with many growing interests in it requiring all the energy and ability which its superintendent can devote to them. Supposing that at the forthcoming Conference the Wesley people were to invite one of the foremost men in the Connexion to be their superintendent, would they be content for him to go trotting about for half his time during the next three years all over this large district, and to have his place supplied by a young man from Handsworth College? And in the case of the district it is clear enough that no man can devote to it the time and effective oversight necessary to general prosperity and success who has his hands full, and sometimes more than full, by the various demands made upon him by his circuit. That the scheme is fraught with difficulties, both of a financial character and in the way of defining the power and prerogatives of the new department, we can readily understand. Most circuits, we believe, are barely able to meet any further financial liabilities; and it will be a delicate task to adjust the relationship of the new order to the superintendents, and to the circuit constitution. But if the scheme will facilitate Wesley’s great idea of spreading Scriptural holiness throughout the land, and will help Connexional administration, these difficulties of detail ought not to prejudice the whole scheme. When the discussion of this matter takes place in Conference, whatever may be the decision arrived at, we hope the main issue will not be influenced by any difficulty of detail or any *ex parte* catch cry.

So far as we can judge from the spirit of Mr. Perks’s pamphlet, and from the discussion of the subject in the Methodist press, the main objection to Dr. Rigg’s scheme does not arise out of difficulties of the present constitution of Methodism, but out of a lawless and vagrant dislike of any fixed and well-defined forms of Church government, particularly those of an episcopal cast. In fact, the discussion of this great legislative measure has been taken out of its legitimate sphere, and has already resolved itself into a controversy of episcopacy *versus* dissent. Mr. Perks has a perfect hatred of any development of Methodism that would bring it into closer alliance with the Church out of which it sprang. He associates all the evils of the Church in the past with its particular form of ecclesiastical polity, and does not recognise the well-known fact that the Dissenting bodies were in just as deplorable a condition spiritually as the Established Church when Wesley commenced his great work. He talks of Methodism being tainted with the foul breath of priestcraft, dreads a measure that will alienate the Methodist Church from Nonconformity, and devotes all his energies to the task of alienating it further from the mother Church, and then he asks, “Why agitate Methodism?” The question comes with a bad grace from men who for years past have been trying to subvert the fundamental principles of John Wesley Methodism, and to convert it into another Nonconformist sect. The agitation in Methodism has never come from those who prefer the Church of England forms of government; all the great troubles of Methodism have come from the opposite party; and the gentlemen who pit the laity against the ministry, and who

constantly decry the power exercised by the latter, are responsible for keeping up that agitation. As between minister and layman one man is as good as another, but when a man is set apart to do a particular work, in the interests of order it is only right that that he should be entrusted with power corresponding to his responsibilities. If here and there a man is to be found who abuses his power, that is no valid argument against the greater number who exercise it conscientiously, with modesty and discretion. Mr. Perks seems to think that if Methodism could be recast upon purely democratic principles the masses of this country, who are at present alienated from her on account of her sacerdotal leanings, would fly to her Communion like "doves to the windows," but in the Nonconformist and democratic Methodist churches of this country all the "irregular principles" which find such an enthusiastic advocate in the honourable M.P. for the Louth Division of Lincolnshire are in full blast, and yet we don't see that they have exactly solved the problem of reaching the masses, and of those who leave Methodism to-day, we venture to say that there are more who leave on account of its trend in the direction of democracy than on account of any foul taint of priestcraft.

But this is an argument which ought never to have been imported into the discussion. We recognise the fact that Methodism is a compromise between two widely divergent schools of ecclesiastical thought, and has to "steer a wise and steady course" between Scylla and Charybdis. John Wesley Methodism is an historic institution, and has a noble individuality to maintain; and although we favour an episcopal form of Church government, yet it were better that this new scheme should be rejected rather than that Methodism should become a servile imitator of the Establishment, or lose its identity among the numerous bodies of Dissent. Dr. Rigg is one of the wisest and ablest legislators in Methodism to-day; such men don't live for ever, and when they are gone it is not easy to fill their places, and it would not be gracious on the part of the younger bloods of Methodism to stone his proposal to death without giving it a fair and a dispassionate discussion. For ourselves we think his plan might be so formulated as not to introduce any friction into circuits and to secure the one end he so evidently desires, viz., easier and more efficient Connexional administration.

A FEW SUGGESTIONS.

The Methodists at present have peace within their borders, we hear of no spirit of agitation in the Connexion, and, barring the vexed and thorny subject of the episcopate—which after all may not turn out to be such a frightful bogey as was at first imagined—we are not aware of any burning question to be brought before the Conference this year. But looking around Methodism we think we can see a few things which the gentlemen when they assemble might consider with much advantage to their communion.

Dr. Rigg has placed before the Methodist public a scheme, not very definitely formulated as yet, for the grouping of districts; but is there not a more urgent need for the grouping of circuits? One thing which has very largely contributed to the spread and strength of Methodism is the circuit spirit, but of late years in some places there has been a strong trend in the direction of Congregationalism, than which we can conceive of nothing more antagonistic to the spread of Methodism. Some preachers have a penchant for dividing circuits. They find themselves appointed to a circuit of somewhat extensive area, with three, four, or even five men upon the ground; it occurs to them that the circuit is unwieldy, and could be better worked if divided. That can often be done with advantage when there are centres both numerically and financially strong, around which the weaker places may be grouped; but it sometimes

happens that there is only one really influential centre, and when the separation is made the weak places are formed into a circuit which drags on a feeble existence for years. There are, of course, other causes at work beside unfair divisions which produce weak circuits, such as agricultural depression, dead and dying industries, emigration, &c. In the Birmingham and Shrewsbury District it is well known that there are circuits in a most deplorable condition, and for years have scarcely been able to maintain an existence. They have been a perpetual source of anxiety to more than one chairman, and the poor men who have to work single-handed upon the ground toil on in succession, utterly dispirited and hopeless, only too glad when the time comes for them to remove to some other sphere. Now would it not be a wise policy, and one quite in harmony with the spirit of original Methodism, to group many of these single isolated stations round a common centre, put down a strong man there with an efficient staff of helpers, and give him a free hand, within constitutional limits, to evangelise the district? We believe that the Home Mission Fund might be better spent in this way than by doling out its dribbles here and there to weak single stations, with but little better results than to perpetuate weakness and poverty. The gentleman who is unanimously recommended to the Conference as the "General and Organising Secretary" is a man of comprehensive intellect and enlightened views; he has already rendered distinguished service to the Connexion in many ways, and there is now an opportunity for him to leave an enduring monument to his fame by solving the difficulty of poor struggling circuits in country districts.

The extension of what, in American phraseology, is called the "time limit" of the itinerancy ought not much longer to be shunted. If the Conference is really of opinion that the Methodist people do not wish for an extension of the time, let them put an end to the present controversy, for a time at least, by referring the subject to the District Meetings, that it may be discussed in a full session. They tried to hang it up at the last Bradford Conference, but it has been taken down again; they may hang it up once more, but those who want the change will not be satisfied until the opinion of the Connexion is taken upon it in the District Meetings. The question has been before the Connexion for about ten years now; public opinion has grown upon it from year to year, until at the last District Meetings the majority of the districts, we believe, voted in favour of an extension of the time. The discussion of the subject has been conducted in as calm and temperate a manner as could be desired; no spirit of disloyalty to Methodism, no feeling of violent agitation has been imported into it; but there seems to be a growing conviction to the effect that a law which necessitates the removal of a preacher at the end of every third year is inimical, upon the whole, to the best interests of the Methodist Church. There are some good Methodists who seem to have the idea that this is a change desired chiefly by the younger Methodist preachers: this is a view put forth in an anonymous pamphlet which has just come into our hands, and which we should have liked much better if the evident design of the writer had not been to have a fling at the younger preachers. But we can assure that anonymous person that the burden of the present limited term of appointment is mainly felt, not by men who are just entering upon their work, and whose experience does not enable them to form a correct judgment of the real merits of the case, but by men who, after twenty-five or thirty years peregrinations, from Dan to Beersheba, find that they have never taken deep root anywhere in the land, and who have never been able to consolidate and conserve the work to which they have devoted the best years of their life. Some of the districts have pronounced decidedly against any change, the Cornish and the York districts *e.g.*, do not want

it. We are not surprised at the opposition to the change which comes from "Down West." Cornish people have always been noted for their love of the preachers, especially for new ones. A Cornish Methodist was once asked what two things in all the world he would have if he was as rich as Squire Bassett. "A fig pudden every day, and a new praicher every Sunday" was the prompt reply. Dr. Rigg has referred to this subject in his book on Church Organisation, but he scarcely discusses it on its own merits, but magnifies the legal difficulties which stand in the way. But we argue that if it can be shown the change is desirable in the interests of Methodism the sooner the legal barrier is removed the better. Dr. Rigg contends that the average term of years of residence in the same charge among Congregationalist ministers does not "much exceed three," whilst among the clergy of the Church of England, if the beneficed ministers are left out of account, the average is still less. But that way of looking at the matter ignores the fact that in Methodism the Pastorate is divided between two, three, four, and sometimes five ministers. We once heard an aged Methodist preacher say that he reckoned his stay of three years in a circuit where he was one of three ministers to be equal to a ministry of about nine months. The opponents of this measure try to obscure the main question by holding up before the Methodist public the frightful scarecrow of a "fixed pastorate!" But the advocates of the measure repudiate the idea of a fixed pastorate as earnestly and as emphatically as their opponents can do. What they modestly ask for is simply an extension of time. The principle is conceded in the case of the missions, and has been found to work well, although we cannot say that the way in which the law is evaded is very creditable to a great religious denomination. But what is sauce for the goose ought to be sauce for the gander. "Change is popular," says Dr. Rigg, and is "generally believed to be beneficial;" we thought the worthy Doctor had lived long enough in this world not to be imposed upon by popular cries or general beliefs. Anyway, looking at this subject from the outside, to say nothing of the enormous expense incurred by the present system, we can conceive of nothing which tends more to produce instability in the Methodist societies, to minimise a preacher's influence, or to demoralise a preacher's family, than an antiquated law which compels a man to take himself up root and branch at the end of every three years.

Both the Methodist Hymn Book and Tune Book require a thorough revision. We have nothing to say against the last revision, except that some things were done which ought not to have been done, and a few things were left undone which ought to have been done. With regard to the tunes, as a writer in one of the Methodist papers has recently observed, there are some hymns that are never sung for the want of suitable tunes. There is scarcely a six-eight in the whole collection that does not drag at the third verse. Among the long metres it is time that old Wareham was superannuated. We never hear it sung but with positive pain. It always reminds us of an asthmatical old man stumping upstairs, but having to make a brief pause at about every fifth step. The hymn book is universally allowed to be one of the best collections in the language, but it is awkwardly arranged. At present there are practically two collections bound together, but the arrangement is about as bewildering to a stranger as Bradshaw's Guide, or the New Street Station to a Conference visitor. The whole book should be recast under respective headings of subjects. There should be a larger collection of hymns for public worship, for children's services, and for voicing the ethical and practical side of the religious life. Among the society hymns a few might be improved by removing from them such offensive terms as "brutes," "worms," "fools," "idiots," and the like. We

should be glad in the next revision to see the fine old hymn on the Beatitudes, No. 676 in the old book, restored.

What steps will the Conference take in relation to the Afternoon movement? Here is a new department of Methodist Church work sprung into existence, which, if rightly handled, may prove an enormous accession of strength to the Connexion. In some places it is in fair touch with the Church, whilst in others it is drifting into irregular ways, and there is just a danger of its developing into an *imperium in imperio*. Let the Conference be wise in time; it has sometimes legislated upon the principle of shutting the stable-door after the horse has gone. We make all these suggestions in a friendly spirit, and give the Conference a sincere welcome to our city. We trust that the deliberations will be marked by the same spirit of harmony and unanimity that has characterised previous gatherings here, and in the matter of hospitality we hope the Birmingham people will maintain the honourable traditions of the past.

NO. 7.—A PILGRIMAGE TO QUINTON.

Some time towards the close of the last century or early in this a Birmingham doctor, called Macdonald, was thrown from his horse and killed. His son, then a little boy, was adopted by Mr. Ambrose Foley, a gentleman living at Quinton. The boy took the name of his adopted father and was known as Henry Foley Macdonald, and became identified with the Methodist Society which Mr. Foley had commenced in the village. In this way Mr. Macdonald came into possession of some interesting relics connected with Mr. Wesley's visits to Quinton; he died about 40 years ago, when these memorials of the past became the property of his son and daughter. We made a pilgrimage to Quinton the other day for the purpose of seeing these old souvenirs; would that it had been in our power to have interviewed them—what an interesting story they could have told. But alas! whilst much pious chatter and friendly gossip doubtless took place over that venerable but now sadly dilapidated tea-pot, no one of its secrets would it disclose to us. The kind communicativeness of Miss Macdonald, however, somewhat compensated for the helpless reserve and taciturnity of the battered old fragment, and from her we gathered a few valuable items of information concerning its origin, its misfortunes and associations, which we hope may prove interesting to all lovers of Methodist antiquity.

These relics originally consisted of several articles, but time and the relic mongers have made sad havoc among them, and they are now reduced to an autograph letter of Wesley, two quaint and beautiful old china cups and saucers, and the teapot to which we have referred. The letter was written to Mr. Foley, of which the following is a copy:—

London, February 26, 1782.

Dear Sir,—On Saturday, March 23rd, I hope to be at Birmingham in order to open the new chappel (*sic*) and to spend a few days there. About the middle of the ensuing week I shall be willing to give you a sermon at Quinton. I am glad to hear that our labour there has not been in vain, and that you are not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ. It will be a particular pleasure to me to see Mrs. Foley, and I hope to see her happier than ever she has been yet. Peace be with your spirit.—I am, your affectionate Brother,

J. WESLEY.

The chapel to be opened referred to in this letter was Cherry Street Chapel; it was not opened at the time anticipated, as we have seen in a previous article, but in the month of July of that same year. The visit to Quinton was not made as he expected, for on March 23, with the help of two horses, in addition to his own, he was struggling along the deep, long snow-blocked roads between Bridgnorth and Madeley, and was in danger of leaving the wheels of his coach behind; and in the middle of the ensuing week he

was at Congleton, where he found the Calvinists just breaking in, and striving to make sad havoc of the flock.

The cups and saucers are part of a set which belonged to Mr. Wesley, and which he presented to Mrs. Foley. Tradition does not say of how many pieces the original set was composed, nor where all the other pieces have gone. When the late Rev. William King was superintendent of the Islington Circuit, his wife took a great fancy to the old cups and saucers, and well she might, for they are very beautiful pale blue china with wonderfully executed figures of Chinese magnates decked out in gorgeous drapery of red and gold. Miss Macdonald parted with some of the set to her, and we hope they have been carefully preserved. The cups are a little smaller than the present-day cups, although larger than the modern small abominations over whose washy contents you are expected to make yourself agreeable at afternoon "At Homes." Like all the cups we have seen belonging to that period, they are without handles. Great care has been taken of them, for they are without crack or flaw, and the colours look as fresh to-day as when they were first made. To the lovers of old china, or to the student of the ceramic art, they are simply charming—just such quaint exquisite bits of old ware as send enthusiastic young ladies into ecstasies, and over which they clasp their hands adoringly and exclaim "Ain't they just lovely!"

The chief interest, however, centres in the old teapot, which has had a somewhat rough and chequered history. During Wesley's visits to Quinton he had received many kindnesses from Mr. and Mrs. Foley, who were his first adherents there, and by way of showing his appreciation of the services of the good lady, whom he seems to have esteemed very highly, he presented her with this tea-pot, which was expressly made in the Potteries from designs of his own. It is a round vessel about six inches high, broad at the base and narrowing towards the lid, which is about two-and-a-half inches in diameter, and capable of holding about a quart of water. On the reverse is an inscription which might suggest to an imaginative mind that the conversation which sometimes took place in those ancient times over the social conviviality of tea drinking was not more edifying or profitable than in our own more degenerate days:—"Let your conversation be as cometh the Gospel of Christ." An exhortation peculiarly apposite to an occasion when it has been said that—

"At every sip a reputation dies."

History is as silent as the teapot on the social infirmities of pious Mrs. Foley, and, indeed, we are not wishful to suggest that she had any; but we are afraid that in our day it would not always be safe or prudent to present a lady with a souvenir for the tea table containing an inscription of so pointed and appropriate a character. On the obverse is a portrait gallery in a circle, the frame of which is composed of the miniatures of fifteen of the early preachers, some of whom itinerated in the Staffordshire Circuit, and in the centre a larger portrait of the founder. We cannot but think that the venerable John had a spice of vanity in him after all, considering the number of portraits he had taken during his lifetime. The names of the fifteen preachers forming the frame are C. Hopper, T. Hanby, P. Jacob, W. Thompson, T. Hampson, T. Hanson, J. Hall, J. Stead, J. Goodwin, R. Costerdine, T. Taylor, J. Mason, J. Allen, J. Pawson, J. Murlin. On the top of the circle to the left-hand are two tables representing the

Ten Commandments, and to the right the cross, symbolical, we presume, of the Law and the Gospel.

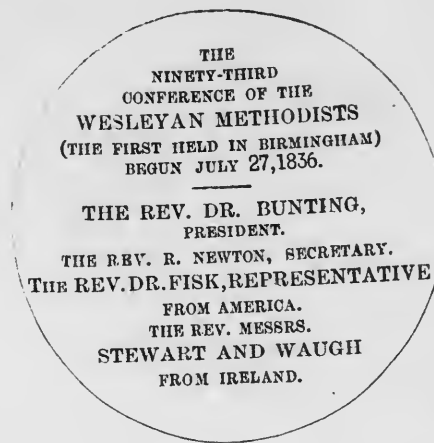
Time has not dealt as kindly with the old teapot as with the cups and saucers. There lived in Suffolk Street some years ago a chemist called Goodwin, either a son or a grandson of one of the preachers whose miniature is in the historic frame. Mr. Goodwin was a local preacher among the Methodists, and during one of his visits to Quinton was desirous of seeing the venerable old relic on which his relative occupied a humble place. Whether it was that he was overcome by his emotions we cannot say, but he let the teapot fall out of his hands, and in a moment it lay in a hundred fragments upon the floor. It was an awful calamity, for not only had he, like Moses, broken all the Ten Commandments at once, but, what was more serious to the owner of the teapot, there seemed to be an utter end of Mr. Wesley's affectionate souvenir to Mrs. Foley. But it is well for the world that there are constructive geniuses who can to some extent at least repair the mischief wrought by careless and clumsy hands. A bazaar was being held somewhere in the West Bromwich Circuit, and the Rev. Thomas Llewellyn sent over to Quinton for the Wesley relics to exhibit on that occasion, and gave particular instructions to bring away the fragments of the shattered teapot. He got some skilful artist to piece the broken fragments together, with the result that, barring one small hole, the venerable old memento has been restored to a condition of respectability which does justice to the loving care bestowed upon its reconstruction. If Mr. Llewellyn had not undertaken this labour of love perhaps the £12 which was raised at the bazaar in connection with the exhibition of the relics might not have been realised, and one of the most interesting memorials of the founder's visits to this neighbourhood would not have been in existence.

With the teapot Mr. Wesley presented Mrs. Foley with a quantity of tea, but as he did not give her a recipe for making it at the same time, and as the art of tea making was not then very extensively known, we are afraid her first brew can hardly be regarded as a success, and the friends and neighbours who were called together to inaugurate the era of tea-drinking at Quinton would scarcely relish the new beverage. When tea was first introduced into this country many people thought it was a new kind of vegetable. Southey mentions the case of a lady who, on having a pound of tea presented to her, boiled it as she would have done pease or kidney beans, and served up the leaves with butter and salt to her visitors, who voted the thing a detestable decoction, and were astonished that even fashion could make such a dish palatable. Mrs. Foley's first effort was scarcely more successful, for according to tradition she boiled the tea in a meslin pan—a vessel, we believe, formerly used by farmers to boil milk in during hot weather to prevent its turning sour—and then served out the liquor to her friends in the dainty china we have described. History has left us no account of the verdict which was pronounced on that occasion, but we doubt whether the new beverage was regarded as an improvement upon the small beer then in general use. Miss Macdonald, who told us the story, suggested that the tea would be very strong; perhaps it was. A small quantity of tea brewed in that manner goes a long way, a fact fully understood by a certain class of modern refreshment caterers. Until our ancestors became more skilful in the art of making tea there was no danger of the "home brewed" being displaced, and indeed it was a long time before the new beverage proved any effectual remedy for national tipping.

MEDAL STRUCK TO COMMEMORATE THE FIRST
WESLEYAN CONFERENCE IN BIRMINGHAM.



OBVERSE.



REVERSE.

A QUINTON SOUVENIR OF JOHN WESLEY.



BIRMINGHAM